



## CULTURE OF SECRECY AND STIGMA IN A NOLLYWOOD FILM: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF ABORTION NARRATIVES AND FEMALE UNDERGRADUATES' PERCEPTIONS IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

Unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion remain pressing public health concerns in Nigeria, yet limited scholarship has examined how Nollywood films construct social meaning around these issues. This study investigates how the film *Abortion* represents secrecy, stigma, and reproductive decision-making, and how female undergraduates interpret these representations. Grounded in health communication and feminist media theory, the research adopts a mixed-method single-case design that integrates thematic content analysis of the film with survey data from 376 female students at the Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. The analysis shows that the film constructs unintended pregnancy within a moral framework shaped by economic vulnerability, sexual exploitation, secrecy, and symbolic punishment. The protagonist's trajectory links reproductive choice to social condemnation, isolation, and severe medical consequences, reinforcing patriarchal regulation of female sexuality. Survey findings indicate strong perceived alignment between the film's portrayal and prevailing societal norms. Respondents report that fear of stigma, family judgment, and social rejection influence concealment decisions, while many also report reconsideration of reproductive health choices after viewing the film, reflecting observational learning and vicarious reinforcement processes. The study argues that the film simultaneously reproduces dominant stigma norms and stimulates reflective engagement among viewers. Rather than generalising to Nollywood broadly, the paper offers analytic generalisation to theoretical constructs linking media representation, stigma internalisation, and behavioural intention. The findings contribute to mediated reproductive health scholarship by clarifying how cinematic narratives participate in both the reinforcement and potential re-evaluation of secrecy within Nigerian socio-cultural contexts.

**Keywords:** Culture of secrecy, Unsafe Abortion, Unintended Pregnancy

### Introduction

Countries face various challenges associated with reproductive health. These challenges range from access to quality family planning services (Elneimeiri et al., 2020; UNFPA, 2016), poverty limiting the nature and scope of healthcare services for reproduction (Kingsley, 2023), lack of education militating

against understanding the benefits associated with maternal health (Amoadu et al., 2022), and cultural and social norms standing as barriers to adoption of appropriate reproductive health practices (Gillespie et al., 2022). Hence, unintended pregnancies among women occur frequently. Ajayi et al. (2021, p. 9) observed that "...desire to maintain a relationship, contraceptive knowledge, misinformation about contraceptive side effects, and lack of trusted mentors were the main reasons for unintended pregnancies...." Performance Monitoring for Action (PMA, 2020, p. 2) reported that "all types of women have abortion." In Nigeria, women in their twenties (54%), living in urban areas (73%), married or cohabiting (51%), mothers (56%), women with secondary or higher education (82%), and women in school (29%) reported abortion experience at one point or another. The prevalence of abortion does not translate to safety. Studies describe abortion as risky for women because many cases arise from unwanted pregnancies (Bell et al., 2020).

Film has been associated with the capacity to shape perceptions and ideologies among audiences. Audiences perceive and reflect on the values depicted in cinematic realities, and many find resonance with personal experiences (Rutherford and Baker, 2021). Film communicates cultural values. Film educates, informs, and entertains (Hanmakyugh, 2020). Cinematic narratives mirror society and function as reflexive images of audience experiences. Such representations influence perceptions and attitudes toward reproductive health issues. Portrayal of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in selected Nollywood films influences viewers' understanding and acceptance of these themes as realities in individual lives (Onyenankeya et al., 2017). When secrecy surrounds unintended pregnancy, knowledge of reproductive health becomes embedded within cinematic realities (Staessen and Boelens, 2023; Terrone, 2022, 2020). The present study assumes that portrayals grounded in normative reproductive health standards will alter perception and attitudes and support adherence to reproductive health best practices.

### **Statement of the Problem**

A large body of Nollywood films presents narratives on unintended pregnancy and abortion (Ofundu et al., 2023; Uche et al., 2022; Watson et al., 2021). Prior studies identify determinants of unintended pregnancy among women. Existing research also documents reproductive health outcomes associated with abortion practices. Yet scholarly attention to the culture of secrecy surrounding unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion within cinematic representation remains limited.

This gap constrains understanding of how cinematic narratives sustain silence and stigma in public discourse on reproductive health. Secrecy embedded in film narratives shapes societal perception of unintended pregnancy and abortion. Such portrayals weaken open discussion of reproductive health challenges and reduce adherence to recommended reproductive health guidelines and laws.

Limited scholarly focus on secrecy within film narratives produces a gap in literature on media representation of reproductive health. Empirical evidence on how Nollywood narratives reproduce stigma or silence surrounding unintended pregnancy and abortion remains sparse. The absence of such evidence restricts systematic understanding of the relationship between cinematic narratives, social norms, and attitudes toward reproductive health.

The paper addresses this gap. The study examines representation of reproductive health in Nollywood films with attention to secrecy surrounding unintended pregnancy and abortion. The paper analyses how cinematic narratives shape societal norms and attitudes toward reproductive health practices.

### **Objectives**

The following areas serve as the core objectives of the study:

1. Analysis of the cinematic portrayal of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion through recurring themes, settings and characters influenced by socio-cultural factors.

2. Investigation of how the culture of secrecy reinforces the dominant stigma norms associated with unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion.
3. Examination of the participants' perceived impacts of culture of secrecy on reproductive health matters as depicted in the film 'Abortion'.
4. Investigation of the implications of the culture of secrecy on the uptake of reproductive health best practices.

## **Conceptual Review**

### **Culture of Secrecy**

Culture of secrecy refers to socially situated practices of concealing sensitive or taboo information, such as unintended pregnancy or abortion, due to fear of moral judgment, stigma, or harm (Slepian et al., 2017; Mayer et al., 2020). In conservative contexts, secrecy functions as both psychological adaptation and social survival strategy, especially where reproductive choices conflict with patriarchal or religious codes. Slepian (2022) estimates that over 97% of individuals intentionally keep secrets, often to manage shame or social vulnerability. In reproductive contexts, secrecy is structurally embedded, reinforcing silence and sustaining the devaluation of women's reproductive agency.

### **Stigma Norms**

Stigma norms are socially sanctioned beliefs that classify certain sexual and reproductive behaviours as deviant (Stangl et al., 2019; Cabieses et al., 2024). Rooted in institutions such as religion, law, and media, they regulate reproductive conduct. In film, stigma often appears through symbolic or physical punishment of characters who transgress social expectations. Erdman (2023) notes that cinema embeds reproductive marginality through shame, fear, and moral framing.

### **Unintended Pregnancy and Unsafe Abortion**

Unintended pregnancy refers to conception occurring when a person does not desire or cannot care for a child (Kebede et al., 2021). Many cases end in unsafe abortion. The World Health Organization (2023) defines unsafe abortion as termination performed by unskilled persons or in substandard conditions. In Nigeria, unsafe abortion reflects structural inequities shaped by fear, misinformation, and limited access to safe services (Bell et al., 2020; Levitt et al., 2023).

### **Socio-Cultural Determinants**

Reproductive decisions are shaped by norms, religion, gender roles, law, and access to resources. Cialdini et al. (1990) distinguish between behaviours informed by norms and those regulated by internalised normative pressures. In Nigeria, reproduction is treated as both private and socially regulated.

### **Cinematic Depictions and Discourse**

Film operates as a cultural agent that produces socio-moral meaning (Rutherford and Baker, 2021). Representations of abortion often frame reproductive deviation through moral failure and punishment, a process Staessen and Boelens (2023) describe as "cinematic moral mapping." Such portrayals reinforce secrecy and stigma, shaping audience expectations about reproductive choice.

## Empirical Review

Empirical research demonstrates that media narratives shape public interpretation of abortion, stigma, and reproductive decision-making. Narrative framing influences how audiences understand reproductive health issues and how societies construct moral meaning around unintended pregnancy.

Research on film and television narratives shows how media representation shapes abortion discourse. Sisson and Kimport conducted a systematic content analysis of abortion storylines in American film and television. The study reports strong disparities between fictional portrayals and real-world abortion statistics. Media narratives frequently depict abortion as rare, dangerous, and socially controversial despite medical evidence confirming the safety of the procedure. The authors conclude that such portrayals distort public understanding of reproductive health and reinforce stigma associated with abortion (Sisson & Kimport, 2014).

Global empirical evidence also shows that abortion stigma operates across multiple social levels. Hanschmidt et al. conducted a systematic review of empirical studies on abortion stigma. The review identifies stigma as a social process operating at individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels. Fear of judgement, social exclusion, and moral condemnation influence women's decisions to conceal abortion experiences and seek clandestine services (Hanschmidt et al., 2016).

Evidence from Nigeria confirms similar dynamics. Bell et al. (2020) analysed abortion incidence and safety in Nigeria using national survey data. The study reports that restrictive legal frameworks and strong social stigma push many women toward unsafe abortion services. Fear of community judgement and social sanctions contributes to secrecy surrounding abortion decisions (James et al., 2025).

A recent scoping review of studies on unintended pregnancy and abortion among unmarried female adolescents in Nigeria by Ayamolowo et al. (2024) identifies several socio-cultural factors influencing reproductive decisions. The review analysed 22 empirical studies drawn from major academic databases. Findings show high levels of sexual activity among adolescents, with unintended pregnancy prevalence ranging from 23.4% to 92.7%. Contraceptive use remained low, contributing to abortion incidence between 20.2% and 51.0%. The study also identifies social pressures, fear of stigma, concern over educational disruption, and childbearing outside marriage as major drivers of abortion decisions and secrecy surrounding reproductive health experiences. The review concludes that limited reproductive health knowledge and strong socio-cultural judgement significantly influence adolescent reproductive outcomes in Nigeria.

These empirical studies show that media narratives, stigma norms, and socio-cultural pressures shape reproductive health decisions. The evidence supports investigation of how cinematic narratives contribute to secrecy and stigma surrounding abortion in Nigerian society.

## Theoretical Framework

The study draws on feminist media theory and health communication to explain how cinematic narratives construct meanings around reproductive health, secrecy, and stigma. Feminist media theory examines how films reproduce or contest gender ideologies and regulate women's bodies and reproductive autonomy (Cefai, 2024; Steiner, 2014). Within this perspective, media texts often frame women's reproductive decisions through moral judgement and patriarchal social expectations. Film narratives therefore function as cultural sites where gender norms and reproductive behaviours are interpreted and reinforced.

Health communication provides a complementary framework for understanding how mediated messages influence public understanding of health issues. Media narratives serve as informal channels through which audiences receive information about reproductive health, social norms, and possible behavioural responses (Ben-Enukora, 2023; Hayes, 2008) (Kreps and Maibach, 2008). In contexts where open discussion of abortion and reproductive health remains socially constrained, cinematic representations shape knowledge, perceptions of stigma, and attitudes toward reproductive health practices.

Together, feminist media theory and health communication explain how films construct gendered meanings around unintended pregnancy and abortion while simultaneously influencing audience interpretations of reproductive health issues. The thematic analysis of the film *Abortion* is guided primarily by feminist media theory in examining how cinematic narratives frame women's reproductive choices and stigma. Survey data are interpreted through health communication perspectives to understand how mediated representations influence perceptions of secrecy, stigma, and reproductive health behaviour among viewers.

## Methodology

This study adopts a single-case design centred on the Nollywood film *Abortion* to examine secrecy, stigma, and mediated reproductive health representation. The aim is analytic generalisation to theoretical constructs rather than statistical generalisation to all Nollywood productions. The single film enables detailed examination of narrative structure, character construction, symbolic punishment, and moral framing. The case therefore serves as an instrumental instance for analysing relationships between cinematic representation, perceived social norms, and reproductive health attitudes. References to broader Nollywood patterns provide contextual framing only, and conclusions remain limited to the selected film and the surveyed population.

The population comprises female university undergraduates in Nigerian universities who are 18 years and above and therefore within the statutory age of consent. A multistage sampling procedure guided participant selection. Purposive sampling identified 300 and 400 level students from the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria. Students in 100 and 200 levels were excluded because admission age begins at 16 and some might not have reached the age of consent. Total enumeration included all 394 eligible students in the selected levels, from which 376 valid responses were analysed. Although drawn from a single institution, the sample shows regional diversity across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones: South West (36.4%), North East (22.2%), South-South (16.2%), North West (8.1%), South East (5.1%), and North Central (12.1%). This distribution improves internal diversity but does not represent the full demographic diversity of Nigeria.

Data were collected using a researcher-designed instrument titled *Abortion, Reproductive Health and Media Questionnaire (ARHMQ)*. The questionnaire contains four sections covering demographic information, perceived impacts of culture of secrecy on reproductive health, stigma norms associated with unintended pregnancy, and implications for adoption of reproductive health best practices. Experts in the Department of Mass Communication and the Tests and Measurement Unit at Federal University Oye-Ekiti validated the instrument. Pilot testing at Ekiti State University produced a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.91. Film analysis applied a hybrid thematic approach combining narrative interpretation and inductive coding. Preliminary review of two abortion-related films, *One Mistake* (Oluchi Afundu TV, 2023) and *Who Impregnated Keira* (Eddie Watson TV, 2023), guided identification of four analytic elements: culture of secrecy, unsafe abortion, consequences of unsafe abortion, and socio-cultural stigma norms.

Participants joined a WhatsApp group created for the study, viewed the film, and completed the questionnaire through a Google Form after responding to verification questions confirming film viewing. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics including frequency, percentages, mean, and standard

deviation for research questions two to four, while research question one was examined through qualitative thematic content analysis validated through intercoder agreement.

## Results

The tables below show the analysis of data and results of the study.

**Table 1: Socio-demographic Attributes of the Respondents**

		Fre q.	%
Students' Age	18-20 Years	74	19.7
	21-23 Years	302	80.3
	Total	376	100. 0
Students' Educational Level	300 Level	71	18.9
	400 Level	305	81.1
	Total	376	100. 0
Students' Employment Status	Part Time Student	11	2.9
	Full Time Student	365	97.1
	Total	376	100. 0
Students' Monthly income/Allowance	Less Than N20,000	68	18.1
	N20,000 – N50,000	300	79.8
	Above N50,000	8	2.1
	Total	376	100. 0
Students' Region of Permanent Residence	North Central	48	12.8
	North East	85	22.6
	North West	24	6.4
	South East	20	5.3
	South South	64	17.0
	South West	135	35.9
	Total	376	100. 0
Students' Frequency of Engaging with Films or Movies	Several times a week	372	98.9
	Once a week	4	1.1
	Total	376	100. 0
Average Number of Nigerian Films Watched per Month	6	33	8.8
	12	190	50.5
	More than 12	153	40.7
	Total	376	100. 0

Interest in Reproductive Health Issues Depicted in Films	Very interested	204	54.3
	Somewhat interested	152	40.4
	Not very interested	20	5.3
	Total	376	100.0
Involvement in Reproductive Health Advocacy or Activism	Yes	254	67.6
	No	122	32.4
	Total	376	100.0
Consideration of Knowledgeable about Reproductive Health Matters	Very knowledgeable	186	49.5
	Somewhat knowledgeable	162	43.1
	Not very knowledgeable	28	7.4
	Total	376	100.0
Do you understand the implications of unsafe abortion?	Yes, I am fully aware of the implications.	308	81.9
	Somewhat, I have some understanding but would like to learn more.	64	17.0
	No, I am not familiar with the implications.	4	1.1
	Total	376	100.0

The sample consists predominantly of students aged 21–23 and mainly 400-level undergraduates. Most are full-time students with moderate monthly allowances. Participants report residence across all six geopolitical zones, though concentrated in the South West and North East. Film exposure is high, with nearly all respondents engaging with films several times weekly and most watching at least twelve Nigerian films monthly. Interest in reproductive health themes is strong, with a majority reporting prior advocacy involvement and high awareness of unsafe abortion implications. The demographic profile indicates a media-engaged and health-aware sample suitable for examining mediated reproductive narratives

### Answering the Research Questions

#### Research Question One:

Thematic analysis of *Abortion* identifies four dominant narrative clusters: sexual exploitation and economic vulnerability; culture of secrecy; unsafe abortion consequences; and socio-cultural stigma norms. The protagonist's economic hardship and workplace exploitation culminate in unintended pregnancy and concealment. Secrecy operates as both protective strategy and isolating force. Unsafe abortion is depicted through severe medical and relational consequences. Stigma is dramatized through family judgment and social rejection, reinforcing moral regulation of reproductive choice.

#### Research Question Two: What are the participants' perceived impacts of culture of secrecy on reproductive health matters as depicted in the film 'Abortion'?

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of participants' perceived impacts of culture of secrecy on reproductive health matters as depicted in the film 'Abortion'.**

Item	Mean	SD	Decision
Sociocultural factors influence the portrayal of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in films like <i>Abortion</i> .	3.45	0.85	High Influence
Films like <i>Abortion</i> reflect sociocultural norms and values regarding reproductive health issues accurately.	3.64	0.60	Very Accurately
Recurring themes, settings, and characters in films like <i>Abortion</i> accurately represent the sociocultural context surrounding unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion.	3.48	0.85	Very Accurately
Influence of sociocultural factors on characters' decisions regarding unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion in films is accurate.	3.48	0.72	Very Accurately
Culture of secrecy depicted in films influences societal perceptions of reproductive health issues.	3.36	0.82	High Influence
Cinematic narratives can influence public perceptions and behaviours regarding reproductive health issues.	3.42	0.76	High Influence

Across all items, mean scores indicate strong agreement that sociocultural norms shape the film's portrayal of unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion. Respondents perceive the film as accurately reflecting prevailing social values. The dominant pattern suggests that secrecy and stigma are understood as culturally embedded rather than incidental narrative elements. Perceived media influence on public attitudes is consistently rated high.

**Research Question Three: What extent has the culture of secrecy reinforced stigma norms associated with reproductive health matters and unwanted pregnancy?**

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics of the extent at which the culture of secrecy reinforced stigma norms associated with reproductive health matters and unwanted pregnancy.**

Item	Mean	SD	Decision
Fear of stigma influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.72	0.68	Very High Extent
Concerns about social rejection influence my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.59	0.72	Very High Extent
Fear of judgment from family members influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.63	0.68	Very High Extent
Lack of social support influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.30	0.91	High Extent
Fear of negative impact on relationships influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.38	0.78	High Extent
Cultural or religious beliefs influence my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	3.44	0.79	High Extent
Lack of access to reproductive health services influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	2.90	1.07	High Extent

Personal safety concerns influence my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	1.86	0.74	Low Extent
Fear of legal consequences influences my decision to keep an unintended pregnancy a secret.	1.80	0.67	Low Extent
I have observed instances of stigma surrounding unintended pregnancy and abortion in films like <i>Abortion</i> .	3.43	0.79	Occasionally
Impact of stigma and secrecy on characters' reproductive health decisions in films like <i>Abortion</i> .	1.68	0.87	Negative
Culture of secrecy portrayed in films like <i>Abortion</i> accurately reflects real-life societal attitudes toward reproductive health matters.	1.11	0.31	Yes
Films like <i>Abortion</i> have the potential to challenge societal norms and attitudes regarding reproductive health issues.	3.28	0.84	High Potential
Films like <i>Abortion</i> can reduce stigma and promote open discussion by portraying diverse perspectives.	3.33	0.87	High Extent
Films like <i>Abortion</i> can reduce stigma and promote open discussion by depicting realistic scenarios.	3.38	0.81	High Extent
Films like <i>Abortion</i> can reduce stigma and promote open discussion by challenging stereotypes and misconceptions.	3.47	0.74	Very High Extent
Films like <i>Abortion</i> can reduce stigma and promote open discussion by educating audiences about reproductive rights.	3.56	0.75	Very High Extent

Fear of stigma, family judgment, and social rejection emerge as the strongest drivers of concealment. Interpersonal pressures outweigh structural factors such as legal consequences or personal safety concerns, which are rated low. Participants acknowledge observing stigma in the film and perceive secrecy as reflective of real societal attitudes. Notably, respondents also identify the film's potential to challenge stigma through realistic portrayal and stereotype disruption, indicating tension between norm reinforcement and norm critique.

**Research Question Four: What are the perceived implications of culture of secrecy on the uptake of reproductive health best practices?**

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics of the perceived implications of culture of secrecy on the uptake of reproductive health best practices.**

Item	Frequency	%
Seek immediate medical advice and discuss options with healthcare professionals, regardless of societal norms.	343	91.22
Keep the pregnancy a secret and attempt to handle the situation privately without involving others.	320	85.00
Confide in a trusted friend or family member for support and guidance while keeping the pregnancy confidential.	278	73.94
Consult with religious or community leaders for advice on navigating the situation discreetly.	226	60.11

Research available resources and support networks for women facing unintended pregnancies while maintaining privacy.	301	80.05
Engage in open discussions with close acquaintances about the pregnancy and explore available options openly.	247	65.69
Reconsideration of reproductive health decisions after watching films like <i>Abortion</i> .	320	85.10
Response Pattern	—	Frequently

Responses reveal a dual pattern. While all participants indicate they would maintain secrecy, the same proportion report confiding in trusted individuals, consulting religious leaders, and researching support networks. These options are not mutually exclusive; rather, they suggest layered privacy strategies where disclosure is selective and controlled. Open public discussion receives comparatively lower endorsement. A large majority report reconsidering reproductive health decisions after viewing the film, indicating reflective engagement.

Simultaneous commitment to privacy and selective consultation, revealing internal negotiation between concealment and support-seeking.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings demonstrate coherence between the empirical results and the theoretical framework. Thematic analysis and survey data show that *Abortion* constructs unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion within a moral trajectory shaped by poverty, sexual exploitation, secrecy, and stigma. The depiction of economic vulnerability and sexual coercion aligns with evidence linking poverty, limited contraceptive access, and sexual violence to unintended pregnancy in African contexts (Ajayi et al., 2021; Wasswa et al., 2020). The narrative mirrors structural determinants rather than presenting isolated fictional events.

The protagonist's reproductive decision is framed through social condemnation, relational loss, and bodily harm, which function as symbolic punishment. From a feminist media perspective, this framing reflects patriarchal regulation of women's reproductive agency, where reproductive choices outside accepted norms attract moral judgement and social sanction. The sister's judgement and the protagonist's isolation illustrate gendered moral surveillance surrounding female sexuality. Respondents' high ratings for fear of stigma, family judgement, and social rejection mirror this narrative emphasis and indicate alignment between cinematic representation and prevailing social norms. Within a health communication perspective, such mediated portrayals shape public understanding of reproductive health and reinforce stigma that limits open discussion and health-seeking behaviour (Stangl et al., 2019; Moseson et al., 2019).

The study advances analytic rather than industry-wide generalisation. The selected film illustrates how mediated storytelling reinforces secrecy while prompting audience reflection. For reproductive health communication in Nigeria, the findings indicate the need for cinematic narratives that move beyond symbolic punishment toward representations that encourage dialogue, informed decision-making, and improved access to reproductive health information and services.

## Conclusion

This study demonstrates how the selected Nollywood film *Abortion* constructs unintended pregnancy and unsafe abortion through narratives of secrecy, stigma, and symbolic punishment. By integrating thematic analysis with survey evidence, the study clarifies how cinematic representation aligns with perceived societal norms and shapes audience reflection on reproductive health decisions.

Interpreted through feminist media theory, the findings show how cinematic narratives frame women's reproductive choices within patriarchal moral regulation. The film positions unintended pregnancy and abortion within narratives of judgement, social condemnation, and symbolic punishment. Such representations reinforce gendered expectations surrounding female sexuality and reproductive responsibility.

Health communication perspectives further explain how mediated narratives function as informal channels through which audiences interpret reproductive health issues. The results indicate that viewers recognise secrecy and stigma depicted in the film as reflective of prevailing societal attitudes. At the same time, exposure to these narratives prompts reflection on reproductive health choices and the social pressures surrounding unintended pregnancy.

The contribution of the study lies in its analytic generalisation to theoretical constructs linking media representation, stigma internalisation, and reproductive health attitudes. The findings do not claim industry-wide representativeness. Rather, the selected film illustrates how cinematic storytelling shapes public interpretation of reproductive health issues and contributes to both the reinforcement and critical negotiation of secrecy norms within Nigerian socio-cultural contexts.

## Recommendations

This study, being exploratory in design, recommends further probes into the prevalence of the culture of secrecy as it applies to film narratives within Nollywood and cross-cultural studies to determine the intricacies and variations across different cultural contexts. Additionally, it suggests longitudinal research to track changes in cinematic portrayals and societal perceptions over time. Furthermore, exploring the potential impact of alternative narrative frameworks that challenge stigma and promote open discourse on reproductive health issues is warranted. Lastly, collaborative efforts between filmmakers, health educators, and policymakers may facilitate the creation of constructive cinematic representations that contribute positively to public discourse and reproductive health practices.

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